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THE BATTLE OF GONZALES, THE "LEXINGTON" OF  
THE TEXAS REVOLUTION.

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On the fourth of July, 1838, at Gonzales, I met at a festive occasion some of those who had been prominent in the defense of that town and its brass cannon in 1835; and associating with them and others for many years afterwards I had opportunities for hearing from them narratives of stirring incidents of that period. Although these incidents were considered of small importance at the time, I like to recall them and place them on record, that they may not be completely forgotten.

In company with my father, Major Valentine Bennet, who had actively participated in those scenes and who was one of the first officers commissioned at Gonzales by General Stephen F. Austin, I went to some of the places of the vicinity made historic by the movements of the colonists and the events of the battle and retreat, notably the celebrated mound (De Witt's) where the Mexicans encamped; also, the prairie bluff below the town watering place just above where the timbered bottom begins, the place where the cannon was thrown into the river when the town was burned by the retreating army, and the stricken inhabitants terribly weakened by the slaughter in the Alamo of forty of their men, were constrained to abandon the place and try to save themselves in the disastrous flight known as the "Runaway Scrape." It occasioned melancholy feelings to view the ruins of the burnt town, which had evidently been quite a thriving little city, having comfortable two-story dwellings, storehouses said to have been stocked with valuable goods, a cotton gin and mills, and a brick yard, and was able to boast of a regular city incorporation.

My father was acquainted with the circumstances attending the beginning of hostilities at Gonzales, he having located there with some colonists in 1832. He had been in feeble health, having been severely wounded in the battle of Velasco in June of that year. He had been acquainted with the forty citizens who had ridden to

the front and fought and fallen in the Alamo a few days before the time when Gonzales, being deprived of so many of her protectors, was also wantonly sacrificed to the flames. The memory of those heroes of the Alamo should ever be cherished by our people. I record here the names of some of those who went from Gonzales: Capt. Albert Martin, George W. Cottle, Almerion Dickinson, William Dearduff, James George, John E. Garvin, Thomas Jackson, George C. Kimble, Andrew Kent, William King, Jacob C. Darst, William Fishbaugh, Thomas R. Miller, Jesse McCoy, Isaac Milsap, Isaac Baker, John E. Gaston, Robert White, Galby Fuqua, Amos Pollard, John Cane, Dolfin Floyd, Charles Despalier, Claib. Wright, George Tumlinson, Johnnie Kellogg. I became acquainted with the survivors of some of the families of these men after their return to the Guadalupe.

The colonists of DeWitt's settlement had in 1831 been furnished for their defense against the Indians a brass six-pounder which was kept at Gonzales. From rumors that had been heard, the apprehensions of the settlers were excited; and, when in the latter part of September 1835 Colonel Ugartechea commanding the Mexican forces at San Antonio sent a small troop of cavalry with an order for the delivery of the piece, it was resolved by the inhabitants not to give up the gun. The order was directed to Andrew Ponton, the alcalde, and Wiley Martin the political chief at Gonzales, and was brought by Lieutenant Castañeda, who had ten men and an ox cart to carry away the unmounted cannon. In order to gain time the citizens delayed the Mexicans with evasive answers two or three days, in the meantime sending Matthew Caldwell to the Colorado and Washington for re-inforcements. They also secreted the ferry-boat in the slough branch in the timber bottom above town, and the first day mustered eighteen men whose names are as follows: Capt. Albert Martin, Jacob C. Darst, Winslow Turner, W. W. Arrington, Graves Fulchea, George W. Davis, John Sowell, James Hinds, Thomas Miller, Valentine Bennet, Ezekiel Williams, Simeon Bateman, J. D. Clements, Almerion Dickinson, Benjamin Fuqua, Thomas Jackson, Charles Mason, Almon Cottle.

Afterwards when I became acquainted with some of the survivors of this little band of eighteen and heard their narrative of this part of the history, I noticed with what honest pride they referred to it, and the gratification of being able to say, "I was one of the 'Old Eighteen' defenders of Gonzales.'"

Some of the families secreted themselves in the timbered bottoms. Jesse McCoy, Joseph Kent, Graves Fulchear, and W. W. Arrington kept watch at the river. Mr. Kent told me afterward how he and Fulchear in their hiding places could scarcely resist the temptation to shoot at the Mexicans as they came to the opposite bank to water their animals. Texian scouts were sent out in the direction of San Antonio, as it was known that the Mexicans encamped at DeWitt's Mound had sent couriers to the west, and that probably they had been informed by a half friendly Indian who had been loitering about the town of the preparations made there for defense.

The naked cannon was at first buried in Geo. W. Davis's peach-orchard, the ground being plowed and smoothed over. Then a broad-tired ox-wagon was fitted up and the gun raised and mounted upon it, Mr. Darst, Jno. Sowell, Dick Chisholm, and others working diligently at it. Mr. Chisholm afterward narrated to me how he and Mr. Sowell (both of them blacksmiths) managed to prepare shot for the cannon cutting up pieces of chains and forging iron balls out of such scraps as they could procure.

In the short space of forty-eight hours Matthew Caldwell returned from the east with help. Upon the arrival of Mexican reinforcements, increasing their number to about two hundred, their Lieutenant, Castañeda, with a troop, was sent with despatches directed to the alcalde of Gonzales, but could not cross the Guadalupe as the boat had been secreted. The officer was told that alcalde was not in town, but that a messenger might swim over with the despatches without molestation which was immediately done.

The Texian force, now increased to about one hundred and fifty men, organized under the command of John H. Moore and drilled diligently, the Ferry-boat was returned to its landing, and a message sent to the Mexican commander that the alcalde had returned to Gonzales and invited him to come over and get the cannon. Upon hearing this the officer, shrugging his shoulders, replied "I suppose I need not go if I do not want to."

The enemy started on their return to San Antonio, marched about seven miles, and encamped for the night at Ezekiel Williams's place, which they robbed, supplying themselves with many sacks of watermelons.

On the night of Oct. 1st the Texians crossed the river with their cannon, and forming held a council of war, and listened to a patriotic address from Rev. W. P. Smith, a Methodist preacher of Rutersville. Then they marched up the river several miles, and towards morning on Oct. 2d, a dense fog prevailing, their pickets encountered the mounted pickets of the enemy, and a ludicrous firing and scattering ensued, neither force being able to distinguish friend from foe. The Texians, however, were annoyed by a little dog that ran among them, betraying their position. A little lifting of the fog showed the Mexican encampment, and an American known as Dr. Smithers came out calling, "Don't shoot, don't shoot. I have a message;" but the colonists firing their cannon charged up and put the Mexicans to flight, capturing many of the camp equipments. My father told me that the roar of the cannon loaded with cut up pieces of chains, reverberating along the valleys and river in the early morning, was remarkable. Some blood was seen, and crippled animals were left on the battle-ground.

In the division of the camp spoils my father procured an excellent Spanish blanket that was of great value to him in the following campaign, in which he took an active part. Remaining with the troops, he was requested by Gen. S. F. Austin to drill the men, and was appointed lieutenant, being among those first commissioned at Gonzales. He was at the battle of Concepcion on Oct. 28th, and he afterwards took me over that battle-ground, showing me the positions of the troops. He also received from General Austin the appointment of assistant quarter-master general, as is seen from Scarff's Comprehensive History of Texas, Vol. 1 page 541, where the surname printed "Baker" should doubtless be Bennet; and at the siege of Bexar he was complimented for his efficient services in that memorable campaign by the commander in chief, Gen. Ed. Burleson, whose Report may be found in the History of Texas by Jno. Henry Brown, Vol. 1, page 424.